

Amendments to the claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (currently amended) Method for phased separation of a sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~, comprising the processing steps of:

- A) supplying a sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~,
- B) positioning the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~ relative to a separating element ~~(1, 42)~~,
- C) moving at least two pressing members forming part of the separating element ~~(1, 42)~~ toward each other with a first movement such that the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~ is constricted locally,
- D) moving the pressing members ~~(7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35)~~ apart, and
- E) moving at least two cutting members ~~(3, 23, 25)~~ forming part of the same separating element ~~(1, 42)~~ toward each other such that the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~ is separated at the position of the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~ constricted locally during processing step C).

Claim 2. (currently amended) Method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~ is supplied at a constant speed and that along a part of the transport path of the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~ the separating element ~~(1, 42)~~ is advanced parallel to the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~.

Claim 3. (currently amended) Method as claimed in claim 1 ~~or 2~~, characterized in that the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~ is locally constricted by at least partially displacing sausage dough ~~(53)~~ locally from a casing ~~(54)~~ enclosing the sausage dough ~~(53)~~.

Claim 4. (currently amended) Method as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that the sausage dough ~~(53)~~ is displaced such that casing parts ~~(54)~~ of the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~ on opposite sides are brought into contact with each during constricting of the sausage strand ~~(2, 46, 51)~~ as according to processing step C).

Claim 5. (currently amended) Method as claimed in claim 1 ~~any of the foregoing claims~~, characterized in that the pressing members (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35) are provided with co-acting contact surfaces (32, 36) between which the sausage strand (2, 46, 51) is engaged.

Claim 6. (currently amended) Method as claimed in claim 1 ~~any of the foregoing claims~~, characterized in that the pressing members (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35) and the cutting members (3, 23, 25) of a separating element (1, 42) are operated by a common drive.

Claim 7. (currently amended) Separating element (1, 42) for phased separation of a sausage strand (2, 46, 51), comprising:

at least two pressing members (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35), which pressing members (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35) are relatively displaceable between a release position and an operative position in which the pressing members (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35) are placed closer together than in the release position, and

at least two cutting members (3, 23, 25) assembled with the pressing members (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35), which cutting members (3, 23, 25) are relatively displaceable between a release position and a cutting position,

characterized in that the cutting members (3, 23, 25) are each rigidly paired to a pressing member (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35) and a paired cutting member (3, 23, 25) and pressing member (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35) are situated on opposite sides of the sausage strand (2, 46, 51) to be separated.

Claim 8. (currently amended) Separating element (1, 42) as claimed in claim 7, characterized in that the separating element (1, 42) also comprises drive means connected to the pressing members (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35) and cutting members (3, 23, 25).

Claim 9. (currently amended) Separating element (1, 42) as claimed in claim 8, characterized in that the pressing members (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35) and cutting members (3, 23, 25) are coupled to common drive means.

Claim 10. (currently amended) Separating element (1, 42) as claimed in claim 7 ~~any of the claims 7-9~~, characterized in that the contact side (32, 36) of the pressing member (7, 22, 24,

30, 31, 35, 35) of a rigidly coupled pair (20, 21) of pressing member (7, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 35) and cutting member (3, 23, 25) is directed toward the contact side of the cutting member (3, 23, 25) coupled thereto.

Claim 11. (currently amended) Separating element (1, 42) as claimed in claim 7 ~~any of the claims 7-10~~, characterized in that the separating element (1, 42) is supported by a displaceable holder (5).

Claim 12. (currently amended) Assembly (41) of a plurality of separating elements (1, 42) as claimed in claim 7 ~~any of the claims 7-11~~ characterized in that the separating elements (1, 42) are placed in line.

Claim 13. (currently amended) Assembly (41) of separating elements (1, 42) as claimed in claim 12, characterized in that the mutual distance between successive separating elements (1, 42) is constant.

14. (currently amended) Assembly (41) of separating elements (1, 42) as claimed in claim 12 ~~or 13~~, characterized in that the separating elements (1, 42) are placed on the periphery of a rotatable wheel (43).

15. (currently amended) Assembly (41) of separating elements (1, 42) as claimed in claim 12 ~~any of the claims 12-14~~, characterized in that the separating elements (1, 42) are provided with cam followers (6, 44) which co-act with a cam track (45) likewise forming part of the assembly (41), which cam followers (6, 44) and cam track (45) are relatively displaceable.